

Local Boat Builder Has Passion for Recreating History

Up and coming wooden boat builder Jeff Grey of Snug Harbor Yachts has reversed the tide on his boat building techniques. While continuing to construct modern day motor and sail boats of his own design, Grey has dedicated the majority of the last three years to replicating the ketch Bounty, a 1934 design by famed ship designer L. Francis Herreshoff.

Grey and the anonymous New England yachtsman who commissioned the ship are taking the project to the extreme, keeping it as close to the original details as possible, including using building methods from the 1930s and scouring marine shops for original parts.

The real challenge, Grey says, is in the details. Other builders have replicated the Bounty, but have modified the construction, or used current building methods.

Grey describes his project as a tribute to the designer. "We wanted to make this the best Herreshoff ever built. One final jewel to represent the designer."

Herreshoff is known as a somewhat eccentric, radical designer for his times, Grey said.

"Boats of the time typically had smooth, subtle lines. The Bounty has a Clipper bow, an elliptical transom, a second rail, and the masts are tipped backwards. There's also all sorts of curlicues in the design," Grey said.

"It's really more a magnificent sculpture than a ship," Grey said.

Designing such a sculpture is one thing, Grey said. Building it is quite another.

Snug Harbor is using the plank on frame building techniques used by boat builders in the 1930s to construct the version of the Bounty. They are also using all original materials, devising the rigging from existing patterns and drawings of the original Bounty.

"A lot of these pieces you just can't get anymore," Grey said.

By scouring different dealers and marine shops, Grey has turned up about 60 pieces of new, 1930s hardware that will see its first use on the replicated Bounty. But because a lot of the original pieces are no longer available, Snug Harbor is custom making up to eighty different pieces of rigging and hardware.

"Herreshoff was great at drawings. Then he'd just give it to a builder. There's not a great deal of documentation, so it's a real experience. Every step of the way we ask, 'what would Herreshoff want? It makes it a challenge,'" Grey said.

The Bounty was a 65-foot sister ship to the Ticonderoga, the famed, 72-foot ocean racing ketch, renowned for winning yacht races for decades.

The original Bounty survives today as two separate ships.

According to Grey, a Maine boat builder pulled everything off the original Bounty, from the cabin to the lead keel. He built a new hull, and put all the original parts back onto this new hull.

The old hull also got a new life. A German boat builder



Jon Daley and Jeff Grey stand under the hull of the Bounty. The 65-foot Herreshoff replica is set to be launched by June.

Photo by Jerry Cain

took the hull, refurbished it, and built a whole new ship, with all new pieces, around it. That ship is now sailing in California, Grey said.

Grey's version of the Bounty began in 2001, with a search for the perfect wood for the ship.

"The timber had to be 6 feet thick, 30 feet wide and 47 feet long, and had to be clear with no knots. It had to be hardwood that was rot resistant. The original Bounty was built of white oak, which is impossible to get nowadays," Grey said.

The search for the right wood led Grey to Surinam, where someone Grey knew sold hardwood. Grey went to Surinam, picked out the timbers himself, and then went to the sawmill and saw them cut.

"The wood is the best. No matter how good it's built, if you don't have good wood, you don't have a good boat," Grey said.

Because the pieces of wood were so large, shipping it in traditional containers was out of the question. The wood was sailed up on a schooner from Surinam in the summer of 2001, with the largest pieces making the trip on the deck of the schooner. It was the only way they would fit.

Grey wanted to have the schooner sail right into Duxbury, but because of custom issues, the schooner had to dock in New Bedford.

The logs were air dried for a few months, and then the first stages of construction began.

Preliminary work included drawing a full-scale version of the ship using two levels of Snug Harbor Yachts' shop, and letting the owner get comfortable with the design.

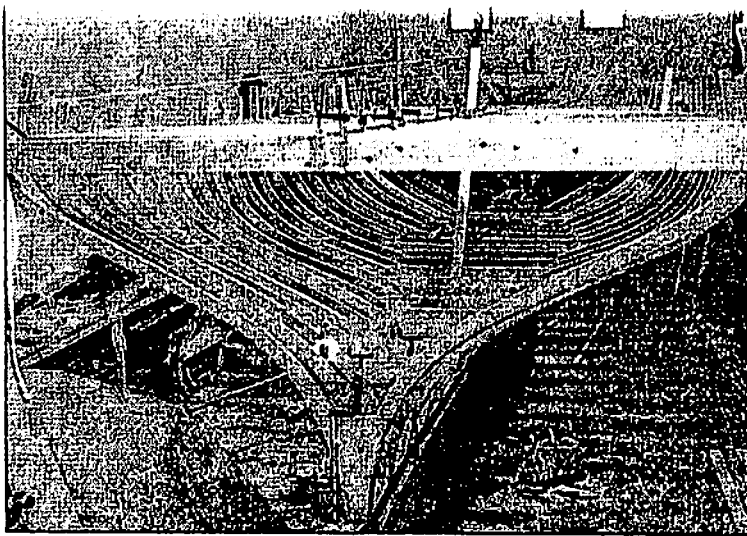
Actual building started in Duxbury, as well. In January, the keel was brought down to Plymouth on a flatbed truck, and assembly began from there. Many pieces of the ship continue to be built in the Duxbury shop, then shipped down to Plymouth for installation.

Grey is leasing space from Brewer Plymouth Marine, which is installing all the mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems for the ship, and is providing the main engine and generator.

Currently, there are about 19 people working full time on the Bounty.

A June 14th launch date is looming. The Bounty will have to be ready to go into the water a week or two before that date, since wooden boats swell when they are placed in the water. Grey will let the boat adjust for a week or more before he tightens the rigging.

"We're going to take it easy," he said.



The hull of the *Bounty* was constructed in Duxbury and then moved to Plymouth.

Photo by Jerry Cain

The launching will be private, since the owner prefers to remain anonymous. He will maintain the *Bounty* for his own private use, Grey said. The ship will spend the summer in New England before heading off to other seas to expand its horizons.

Snug Harbor Yachts will be expanding as well. The business is moving into the buildings in the Millbrook area left vacant by Goodrich Lumber's recent move. This is additional space, with Snug Harbor Yachts maintaining its original buildings on the waterfront at Mattakesett Court.

"The new buildings are perfect. You have a large, empty warehouse, and a separate, heated space for offices," Grey said.

The new buildings may be large enough for a future project Grey and Jon Daley have in mind.

Daley, who previously worked for the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society, joined Grey shortly after he founded Snug Harbor Boatworks, the precursor to Snug Harbor Yachts, in the mid 1990s.

Of his prior career, Daley said, "Here we were taking care of all the old captain's houses, and no one knew anything about shipbuilding. Duxbury was the most prolific area on the Eastern coast in the late 1700s for boat builders, spar makers and sail makers," Daley said.

He said he and Grey both still "keep their eye on the prize", the prize being a project to build a late 1700's brigantine for the town of Duxbury.

"That's what we aspire to. Everything that we do, we're gaining knowledge and experience as we go," Daley said.

"There are national grants. With the historical society and the maritime school, and some serious fundraising, it could be done. It would be a great educational tool, and could be used for environmental research," Daley said.

Grey added, "It would be nice if we didn't have to bring a schooner in to Duxbury [for the opening of the bay]. It would be nice if we had our own."